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# Robert A. Heinlein: A Philosophical Novelist

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**Patricia Marie**  
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ROBERT A. HEINLEIN: A PHILOSOPHICAL NOVELIST

A Thesis

Presented to

the Faculty of the Department of English

Western Kentucky University

Bowling Green, Kentucky

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

by

Patricia Marie Guthrie

July 1985

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ROBERT A. HEINLEIN: A PHILOSOPHICAL NOVELIST

Patricia Marie Guthrie

July 1985

92 pages

Directed by: William McMahon, Joe Survant, and James Heldman

Department of English

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Robert A. Heinlein is a key figure in the development of American science fiction. What makes his contribution unique is his emphasis on philosophical speculation. Heinlein's program is based on rationality as a vital element to salvation. Although the importance of rationality is an aspect of many schools of philosophy, particular value may be gained by comparing Heinlein's system with the philosophy of Plotinus. An examination of Heinlein's key works (Stranger in a Strange Land, The Moon Is a Harsh Mistress, Time Enough For Love, The Number of the Beast--, and various short stories) provides ample evidence to support the idea that the two systems are quite similar. Thus it becomes apparent that Heinlein presents a carefully considered world view which is particularly exemplified in his competent heroes, and in his concern for family, morality, and aesthetics.

ROBERT A. HEINLEIN: A PHILOSOPHICAL NOVELIST

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"To be 'matter of fact' about the world is to blunder into fantasy--and dull fantasy at that, as the real world is strange and wonderful." (348)

--Robert A. Heinlein  
Time Enough for Love

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## PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Robert A. Heinlein is America's foremost writer of speculative fiction. In his essay on the life work of Heinlein, "Rah, Rah, R. A. H.!", Robinson writes:

I don't believe there can be more than a handful of science fiction stories published in the last forty years that do not show his influence one way or another. . . . And perhaps as important, he broke sf out of the pulps, opened up "respectable" and lucrative markets, breached the wall of the ghetto. . . .

You can't copyright ideas; you can only copyright specific arrangements of words. If you could copyright ideas, every living sf writer would be paying a substantial royalty to Robert Heinlein. (95-96)

Heinlein has received four Hugos (voted by readers for the best sf novel of the year); he received the first GrandMaster Nebula for Lifetime Contribution to Science Fiction (voted by fellow writers). He is the only writer who appeared as the Guest of Honor at a World Science Fiction Convention three times. He is an Encyclopedia Britannica authority. Signet and Berkley together claim 23.5 million books in print; Del Rey has at least a dozen titles available (Robinson 97). Obviously his literature is respected in his own field.

At least, it was until recent years. In 1961, Heinlein

shocked readers with the publication of Stranger in a Strange Land. Scenes in this "cult" book were rapidly labeled blasphemous, profane, and obscene. Robinson, in his review of Heinlein's latest book, Job: A Comedy of Justice, writes:

Copies of it will be burned. . . . The book is certain to be described in some quarters as blasphemous, profane, obscene, immoral, subversive, degenerate, disgusting, scandalous, indecent, outrageous, heretical, perverse, perverted, and filthy. It is in fact, I am happy to report, all those things.  
It is also sinfully good reading. (170)

It is true that the novels published since 1961 include descriptions of unusual conduct. Heinlein seems to be attacking fundamental canons cherished by middle-class America. Yet his books continue to sell, and it is rumored that Job fetched a million dollar advance. What is Heinlein doing?

Without a doubt his most recent books are his most important. Stranger is a scathing social / religious / political satire. The Moon Is a Harsh Mistress is a mini-handbook on how and why to stage a revolution. Job is a highly detailed retelling of the biblical narrative interpreted in light of a radical new ideology.

But Heinlein's ideology is not new. Throughout his career, Heinlein has continued to comment on the same values. His issues include the purpose of the family

unit, the role of government and the value of patriotism, and the hazards of dependency. Most important, Heinlein's ideal man is the lone genius: the thinker, the guardian, the omni-competent man of action, the philosopher-king. Because of his extraordinary scenarios, "Moral, spiritual, political and historical lessons which he once would have spent at least a novelette developing are lately fired off at the approximate rate of a half dozen per conversation" (Robinson, "R. A. H!" 115). As Robinson goes on to write, "It has become increasingly evident that he is not the 'pure entertainment' song and dance man he has always claimed to be." Heinlein certainly is not. Furthermore, the ideologies presented by Heinlein bear a striking resemblance to neo-classicism and Neoplatonism.

Christopher notes that the structure of Heinlein's milestone Time Enough for Love is "of Northrop Frye's anatomy class, even more so than most science fiction in that it consists of dialogues (in the Platonic sense) as well as romance. . ." (Letson 196). Time Enough For Love is structured thematically as is music; his chapters are even called "Prelude," "Counterpoint," "Variations on a Theme," "Counterpoint," "Intermission," "Variations of a Theme," "Second Intermission," "Da Capo," "Coda I," and so on. Apparently, Heinlein is concerned about theme and structure; his is not the deteriorating mind some claim. Musicality, of course, is dear to Pythagoras and



neo-Platonists.

In this paper, major representations of these neo-classical and Neoplatonic themes will be explored. Heinlein's competent hero will be examined as he is developed in selected stories. Heinlein's conception of ideal man will be reflected in his vision of the ideal government (The Moon Is a Harsh Mistress) and the ideal leader (--The Number of the Beast--).<sup>1</sup> Heinlein's preoccupation with intelligence and wisdom is exemplified in the character Lazarus Long, who appears in Time Enough For Love, Methuselah's Children, and --The Number of the Beast--. The culmination of these speculations is a morality with roots in traditional philosophy, and close to the rational mysticism of Plato and Plotinus.

This study is justified because of the developing influence of speculative fiction on American society. The ideas presented in this genre have a decided impact on America's youth in particular. Heinlein, in his Plotinian flavored introduction to Tomorrow, the Stars, explains: "the author's purpose is not to escape from reality but to explore seriously the complex and amazing manifold of possibilities which lie revealed in the future of our race--to explore them in the light of what we do know now" (8). Heinlein's stories, even with their bizarre contents,



explore the exciting and rapidly changing present and future in light of philosophic criteria. In his stories he encourages the cultivation of acceptable values; he does not seem to advocate anarchy as so many claim. He is a spokesman of the past to the future. This study proposes to examine his works for their contributions to philosophy and to value theory, focusing on Heinlein's stress on the isolated man of strong intellect, and on the quest for rational wisdom--the general program of Plotinus.

Because of Heinlein's numerous novels and short stories, a comprehensive study of Heinlein's work and the philosophy of Plotinus is impossible in so short a space. This brief study simply makes a contribution to the problem of Heinlein's philosophic intent. It ought not to be assumed that Heinlein has no relation to classical idealism. If it can be shown that Heinlein presents a non-Christian mode of rational mysticism and a doctrine of salvation by human cerebral growth, then Plotinus becomes a very plausible analogue, and Heinlein takes a position in a long classical tradition, even if he also touches certain radical traditions.

The advice and assistance of William McMahon, James Heldman, and Joe Survant is gratefully acknowledged. David Major contributed helpful suggestions about the mechanics of this thesis. Special thanks goes to P.C. Alex, without

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Thanks also to my family. And, of course, the support and encouragement received from Michael is greatly appreciated.

## CHAPTER ONE: SCIENCE FICTION: ITS ROLE IN PHILOSOPHY

"There are no other branches of literary fiction in which serious ideas are regularly considered. . . ."  
(Ash 77)

Science fiction is a relatively new genre. Although elements which characterize the genre (like the fantastic voyage and utopian themes) date from the earliest literature, it was not until World War II that science fiction developed its present sophistication. The genre merits study not only because of its increasing popularity, but also because of its own unique characteristics.

Robert Heinlein is regularly considered to be the most influential science fiction writer. He has helped establish numerous basic tenets of the genre, such as the need for scientific accuracy (Atheling, More Issues at Hand 23). In his article "Science Fiction: Its Nature, Faults, and Virtues," Heinlein praises the genre:

Science fiction joyously tackles the real and pressing problems of our race, wrestles with them, never ignores them--problems which other forms of literature cannot challenge. For this reason I assert that science fiction is the most realistic, the most serious, the most significant, the most sane and healthy and human fiction being published today. (Knight 26)

Heinlein explains that it takes a great amount of knowledge

to create good science fiction, since writers must not only know current science and scientific theory, but must also have literary training (Knight 19-20). Heinlein defines science fiction:

realistic speculation about possible future events, based solidly on adequate knowledge of the real world, past and present, and on a thorough understanding of the nature and significance of the scientific method. (Knight 9)

Furthermore, Heinlein adds, "to that extent to which science fiction influences its readers toward greater knowledge, more independence of thought, and wider intellectual horizons, it serves its prime function" (28). It is Reginald Bretnor, says Heinlein, who best defines the genre. Bretnor says that science fiction shows an awareness not only of science and nature, but also of the "importance of that human activity known as the scientific method,"<sup>1</sup> the knowledge man has already learned, and the "possible effects on human beings of scientific method and scientific fact" (Knight 4). Heinlein insists that science fiction should be judged by the same standards as any other piece of fiction. In fact, "all the usual criteria of literature apply to science fiction . . . only more severely" (Knight 19). Heinlein then asserts that science fiction is "entitled to be judged only by critics well enough educated to be capable of judging" (Knight 19).

The quest for knowledge is a core idea of science fiction. Clareson explains:

. . . the basic stance of science fiction has been that of the Enlightenment. . . . science fiction has accepted the concept that reason is the highest quality of mind and, as a result, both man and society are perfectable. . . . with reason supreme (and thus the universe itself of a unified rational nature), all knowledge can be attained. (16)

This, of course, could perfectly describe the program of Plotinus. C. S. Lewis cites Heinlein's "By His Bootstraps" as that science fiction which "may represent the intellect, almost completely free from emotion, at play" (112). Lewis complains:

How anyone can think this form illegitimate or contemptible passes my understanding. . . . [science fiction stories] are to be tried by their own rules. It is absurd to condemn them. . . . Work of this kind gives expression to thoughts and emotions which I think it good that we should sometimes entertain. (108-109)

Kraft suggests that science fiction is a product "of a specific age perhaps where science is not simply 'love of knowledge' but rather a search to know" (22).

Del Rey gives another value of science fiction:

It's also one of the few places where many of the old, traditional values tend to be preserved. In science fiction . . . it's better to be competent than not. . . . And respect for all intelligent beings is held up as a virtue. (356)



Science fiction is not all gadgets and hardware. Del Rey explains:

C.P. Snow had developed the thesis that there are two cultures, one of science and the other of the humanities, and that few people can exist firmly within both. . . . Science fiction was one area where the two cultures could be fused, as they were being fused in the real world, whether people knew it or not.

Most early science fiction had neglected the humanities, of course. And that was just as bad as the fiction that neglected science. (155)

The philosophic nature and purpose of science fiction is summarized in Miller and Smith's introduction:

[The purpose of science fiction] is rather to provide the artistic means by which an author calls our attention to what is most essential or significant in human experience. This, of course, is the object of the eternal verities or perennial problems of philosophy. (19)

That the absolute judgements of science extend to theology and ethics is obvious. Clark quotes Pearson as saying that science sets out to explore every phenomena, "mental as well as physical. . . . the scientific method is the sole gateway to the whole region of knowledge."<sup>2</sup> Heinlein agrees. Heinlein states that the scientific method is what distinguishes man from animal.<sup>3</sup> He adds that only man can "grasp and embrace the future . . ." and "For this reason I must assert that speculative fiction is much more realistic than is most historical and contemporary-scene fiction and is superior to them both" (Knight 10).

Miller and Smith agree that science fiction and philosophy are closely related:

We won't go as far as Wilhelm,<sup>4</sup> who suggests that science fiction writers have been the sole heirs of the great philosophical tradition. . . . But we do maintain that philosophers ought to recognize, respect, and enjoy science fiction writers as auxiliaries in the joint pursuit of the truth. (19)

In fact, Miller and Smith state that the "ideas of science fiction are the ideas of philosophy. . . . Science fiction is correctly named so long as one thinks of science in the root sense of a scientia (i.e.) 'wisdom,' or 'knowing'" (3). Miller and Smith worry that some feel science fiction is too dialectic because of its ties with philosophy. In reference to Heinlein's The Moon Is a Harsh Mistress they say:

Heinlein's novel has, in fact, been criticised for containing too much talk and not enough action. But the philosophical passages fit well into the flow of plot, and Heinlein makes a conscious effort to relate them to his characters' behavior. (11)

Heinlein, who has been called one of the two science fiction writers able to use the lecture technique effectively,<sup>5</sup> was in 1940 one of the first science fiction writers to deal with religion in "If This Goes On--" (Moskowitz 5-6). Heinlein examines political systems, customs, the nature of intelligence, and learning. In Stranger in a Strange Land, Heinlein presents a sizable discussion of art and artists.

Obviously Heinlein, in his science fiction, speculates on a number of key philosophical issues. Heinlein has helped elevate the genre to its present influential and important status. It is noteworthy, also, that Plotinus saw his visionary speculations about past, present, and future as a scientific theology which could negate the swirling superstitions of his age. The attack upon superstition by scientific epistemology is one of several threads linking Heinlein to Plotinus and to the general tradition of rational mysticism. Plato and Aristotle also envisioned their work as scientific, designed to counteract supersition and irrational thinking. If Plato and Aristotle now seem both scientific and also mystically vague and esoteric, this combination is precisely the stance Heinlein advocates, and he rejects simplistic scientific "realism" which ignores whole levels of reality if it refuses to enter the occult regions.



## CHAPTER TWO: SOME KEY IDEAS AND GENERAL ATTITUDES OF HEINLEIN

"He thinks in terms of the fifth dimension, never stopping at the fourth."

--tag line below Heinlein's  
high school yearbook picture  
(Franklin 9)

Heinlein's style and influence relate directly to the philosophical ideals he discusses in his work. A number of themes are common in Heinlein's fiction. First, Heinlein has an obvious appreciation for sybaritic pleasures: the erotic and the sensuous are prominent features of his work since 1960. Family considerations are also scrutinized in an effort to improve and strengthen this vital element of human society. Heinlein shows a strong interest in the aesthetic life (Stranger 227, 307-310). Religion and morality are often questioned, particularly because Heinlein radically alters traditional mores in favor of more intellectual criteria. Finally, all of Heinlein's ideals center around the growth and adventure of the intelligence. Whether Heinlein is discussing ideal government, belief in the individual, the importance of survival for the human race, or the nature of reality, all of his speculations include a belief in the supremacy of the intelligence. A hierarchy of being with the intelligentsia at the top is one way Heinlein often manifests these concerns, as it is

also the way of Plotinus.

Robinson attempts to estimate the influence of Heinlein:

I don't believe there can be more than a handful of science fiction stories published in the last forty years that do not show his influence one way or another. He has written the definitive time-travel ("All You Zombies--" and "By His Bootstraps"), the definitive longevity books ("Methuselah's Children" and "Time Enough for Love"), the definitive theocracy novel ("Revolt in 2100"), heroic fantasy/sf novel ("Glory Road"), revolution novel ("The Moon Is a Harsh Mistress"), transplant novel ("I Will Fear No Evil"), alien invasion novel ("The Puppet Masters"), technocracy story ("The Roads Must Roll"), arms race story ("Solution Unsatisfactory"), technodisaster story ("Blowups Happen"), and about a dozen of the finest science fiction juveniles ever published. (97-98)

Heinlein must be doing something right. The Number of The Beast-- fetched a record breaking half million dollar advance; Job: A Comedy of Justice earned a reputed one million dollar advance. His books have been translated into twenty-eight languages (Franklin 4). Heinlein's Rocket Ship Galileo was adapted into one of the first science fiction movies; Space Cadet inspired the first science fiction television serial, Tom Corbet: Space Cadet. As a gadget for his novels he invented the waldo and the waterbed. Analog (which was formerly Astounding) featured Heinlein in its June 1985 "Biolog" (profile) even though Heinlein has not published fiction within those pages in over a quarter-century. "Though his name is not on the current contents

page, by rights he ought to appear in one of the "Biologs" since his presence remains in the pages. . . . it's all around us with Heinlein-inspired writing techniques and plot ideas" (129,190). Surprisingly, some critics seem to dislike Heinlein. Scholes and Rabkin note that "the only thing that most critics agree about is the fact that he is there, he is important, he must be dealt with" (55).

Heinlein was one of the first writers whom the most influential editor of the genre, John W. Campbell, Jr., recruited for Astounding. Campbell took several writers under his wing (including Asimov) and told them what he wanted. Campbell wanted accurate science in his stories, but he also stressed social change. "To base a future on physical science and neglect the social developments [and ramifications] was unrealistic," believed Campbell (Del Rey 152). Campbell certainly is a major influence on Heinlein; Campbell published Heinlein's first story, and subsequent stories for over two decades. Campbell's influence may be why Griffiths calls Heinlein "remarkable" since Heinlein "can write both a story of originality and some philosophic and metaphysical interest (such as Stranger in a Strange Land) and a straightforward, conventional space-opera (as in Glory Road)" (47).

Knight praises Heinlein:

Robert A. Heinlein has that attribute which the mathematician Hermann Wezl calls "the inexhaustibility of real things:" whatever you say about him, I find, turns out to be only partly true. . . .

With due caution, then, let me say that in art, at least, Heinlein seems to be as conservative as they come. He believes in a plain tale well told. . . . The people he writes about are healthy, uninhibited and positive, a totally different breed from the neurasthenic heroes of many of his colleagues. (In Search of Wonder 76)

The conservative wholesomeness of Heinlein is easy to miss.

Panshin and Panshin report that Heinlein incorporates a great deal of research into his work (96). As Atheling notes, such craftsmanship is "the reason why newcomers like Heinlein . . . were able effortlessly to push offstage writers who had dominated the genre for many years. . . ." (More Issues At Hand 59-60).

Of Heinlein's style, Moskowitz, in Seekers of Tomorrow, reports:

The reader is not aware that there is a "style." Everything is subordinated to the story, which is carried along almost invisibly by clear prose, natural sounding dialogue, and a careful integration of detail concerning the times, the society, and the past of the characters that never disturb the flow of the narrative. This extraordinary talent is at once Heinlein's triumph and sorrow. It can achieve memorable poignancy as in the case of Requiem, yet no one ever refers to his prose as poetic, because the details are incorporated with such cool efficiency that few realize the author has sacrificed the aesthetics of the individual passage to achieve the unified poetry of the whole. (198)

Plotinus also is criticized for cool impersonality.

Scholes and Rabkin recognize one of Heinlein's greatest achievements: "Heinlein in his first years of publication conceived of a system of stories and novels fitting into a single projected history of the human race" (52). Campbell called this a "Future History." Franklin writes that Heinlein's chart was "Molded on the charts of macrohistory included in Olaf Stapledon's Last and First Men (1930), and sharing Stapledon's vision of a spiral of progress moving upward through cyclical rises and falls . . ." (27). Del Rey also notes that Heinlein's chart "was more detailed about all future developments in science, devices, philosophy, and straight historical events than any writer had developed previously" (99). Heinlein comments: "As prophecies, those fictional predictions of mine were about as startling as for a man to look out a train window, see that another train is coming head-on toward his own on the same track--and predict a train wreck" (Knight 12).

In "One Sane Man," Knight comments:

In reality, there are several Heinleins. One of them is a 19th century rationalist and skeptic, who believes in nothing he can't see, touch, and preferably measure with calipers. Another is a mystic, who strongly believes in the existence of something beyond the world of the senses, and keeps an open mind even toward the ragtag and bobtail of mystical ideas, flying saucers, and Bridey Murphy. (83-84).



The rational and mystic in Heinlein can be reconciled.

Olander and Greenberg recognize that among Heinlein insights

are perspectives and issues which relate to some of the perennial concerns of philosophy, such as the best form of government, whether and to what extent political utopias are possible, and the dimensions of power, liberty, equality, justice, and order. Sexuality, family, love, and immortality are also major themes in his fiction. . . . the treatment of his subject is frequently insightful. (7-8)

Although Heinlein plays with the concept of solipsism in his work, it seems that he more nearly exhibits examples of Neoplatonic thought.<sup>1</sup> Solipsism, according to Reese, is that "doctrine that the individual human mind has no grounds for believing in anything but itself" (539). Heinlein, although he clearly places the individual high, certainly believes in many things besides himself: love, honor, duty, the beloved, patriotism, the state, family, and so on. It is also easy to confuse the individual one with the universal One of Plotinus. Inge explains the thinking of Neoplatonism:

[Disciples of Plotinus] are absolutists--that is to say, they believe that a knowledge of ultimate reality is possible to man; they are monists--their whole quest is for the One in whom all contradictions are reconciled; their faith is not only thought out but lived out--their highest achievement is a beatific vision seen in direct experience; they are deeply religious, and their devotion is blended with their speculation, so that the 'intellectual love of God' is no mere phrase for them. (28-29)

Heinlein writes in Waldo, "Orderly Cosmos, created out of Chaos--by Mind!" (88). This is surely a strong indication that--in this story at least--Heinlein is exploring the possibilities of the Plotinian power within the mind.

Panshin describes Heinlein's objective:

The quest that Heinlein and the various surrogate Heinleins of his stories have undertaken is to understand the meaning of life, and to discover what, if anything, in life is a worthwhile occupation. . . . Heinlein requires nothing short of ultimate answers and total certainty. He desires to know for sure, for once and for all, and the intensity of this desire is what makes him so fascinating a writer. . . . if there is any answer that will satisfy Robert Heinlein, it is this:

Call it the Mystical Solution. This solution says all that exists is God. And the only way out of the illusion of less-than-Godliness is to identify completely with one's Godly nature and occupy oneself in love and service of One's Own True Purpose. (156-157)

If Panshin is right, one would be forced to link Heinlein and Plotinus. Heinlein writes in Waldo:

"The Other World," he said presently, "is the world you do not see. It is here and it is there and it is everywhere. But it is especially here." He touched his forehead. "The mind sits in it and sends its messages through it to the body." (66)

The Plotinian Nous, of course, is in the head and everywhere.

Panshin explains:

More than this, Waldo becomes convinced that the various magical arts are all aborted sciences, abandoned before they had even made clear; that the

world has been made what it is by minds making it so (the world was flat until geographers decided it was round, and the deKalbs worked because their operators thought they would); that the Other World does exist; and that he, Waldo, can make the Other World what he wants it to be, for all time, by deciding its nature and convincing everybody else of his ideas. (35)

Panshin correctly concludes: "In part, this is Heinlein's way of saying, 'There are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in your philosophy,' and that is a far from illegitimate thing for a science fiction story to say" (36).

Knight observes:

It's true that Heinlein's characters tend to seem commonplace by contrast, simply because they're all healthy, physically and mentally, except for an occasional psychotic villain. Heinlein isn't interested in neurotic people, perhaps because he feels they are obsolescent . . . but eccentricity is something else again. ("One Sane Man" 81)

Rose points out another side of the Heinlein hero:

In Heinlein, guilt is not the barrier to effective performance. The need is for appropriate disciplined action, by those capable of it. Sloth, rather than a condition of impotence resulting from guilt, would be the fundamental characteristic of the "worthless" folk in Heinlein's books. (54)

The system of Plotinus, not a Christian system, pushes guilt aside as a minor item.



Optimism is another key element in Heinlein's fiction. Although Heinlein has many scathing remarks on practically every aspect of society, his novels end with hope and happiness. Hope often is found in the education of the young, and in the survival of the family unit. Many of Heinlein's novels, especially his juveniles, are found to be Bildungsroman, or novels of education. Often, his young heroes have a special high school class, a class in History and Moral Philosophy (Starship Troopers) or some such. This class is almost always taught by a disabled military veteran, and in this class, students are asked pointed direct moral questions to which they must give a well-considered reply. The hero often has a guardian who performs a similiar function. Referring to Citizen of the Galaxy, Knight ("One Sane Man") characterizes the guardian, Balsim:

Later, in spite of digressions into the art of begging and the art of learning itself, it becomes clear that what Balsim has to teach is not technique but character. Balsim is an old-fashioned, stiff-necked moral individualist, who keeps undeviating standards for himself while insisting on absolute freedom for other people.  
(87)

Many of Heinlein's characters are general specialists. In Time Enough for Love, Lazarus Long says:

A human being should be able to change a diaper, plan an invasion, butcher a hog, conn a ship, design a building, write a sonnet, balance accounts, build a wall, set a bone, comfort the

dying, take orders, give orders, cooperate, act alone, solve equations, analyze a new problem, pitch manure, program a computer, cook a tasty meal, fight efficiently, die gallantly. Specialization is for insects. (248)

Panshin notes "The Heinlein Individual has three central characteristics: his strength, his singularity, and his ability to teach himself" (169). All of these insights complement Heinlein's demand for competence. The competent man is versatile and is qualified for action and takes action. Plotinus deviates from Christian thought because he declares that the competent man of reason works out his own salvation--just as Heinlein assumes. Olander and Greenburg note that "Survival for the competent is a prerequisite for the survival of the rest, and from this perspective flows his attitude toward morality" (9). In Time Enough for Love, Heinlein's popular character Lazarus Long says, ". . . racial survival is the only universal morality . . ." (242-243). Heinlein writes repeatedly that the common man must be "guided and guarded by a competent elite" (18). Heinlein offers several alternatives for choosing a leader, but he keeps returning to the theme that the intelligent should rule. Scholes and Rabkin agree that Heinlein

believes in a freedom which will allow the "best" people to rise to the top. He is, as Panshin has argued, an elitist who believes in an elite of competence. In many respects he is a

"social Darwinist," who feels that life should be a struggle for survival of the fittest and that the unfit should go to the wall. (56)

Williamson (Bretnor 326-327) suggests that Plato's Republic offers "the idea that reasonable men can create an ideal society here on earth."<sup>2</sup> This "Greek tradition," he argues "allows more individual freedom, a more hopeful view of change" (326). Williamson continues:

Yet I think it does make some sort of sense to say that Asimov and Clarke and Heinlein and a good many others are spokesmen for the Greek tradition in those optimistic moments when they choose to show men solving problems to make things better. (327)

Williamson's thesis quite properly places Heinlein in the Greek tradition of philosophic optimism.

Franklin explains:

The political theory of Lazarus and his creator is based on the belief that most people are stupid, whether on Earth in the twentieth century or Secundus in the forty-third, and that only a tiny elite are capable of thinking intelligently--or are worth being thought about:

"That tiny fraction that hardly shows statistically is the brain. I recall a country that lost a key war by chasing out a mere half dozen geniuses. Most people can't think, most of the remaining won't think, the small fraction who do think can't do it very well. The extremely tiny fraction who think regularly, accurately, creatively, and without self-delusion--in the long run, these are the only people who count. . . ." (396; qte. from Time Enough for Love)

It would not be surprising to find this passage in a work of

Plotinus. Franklin adds:

"Gulf" unequivocally advocates creating an elite not just as a social class, but, as the title suggests, as a new superhuman species, clearly marked off from our doomed race of "homo sap."

. . . [the entire story is] an extended argument preaching the moral and intellectual superiority of "homo novis". . . .

We learn that just as man is distinguished from animals by his ability to think, homo novis is separated from homo sapiens by being "able to think better. . . ."

Throughout all this, there is a nonsensical confusion between thinking "better" in the sense of more skillfully and thinking "better" in the sense of more morally. There is even the outright statement that "Evil is essentially stupid." "Genuises," on the other hand, "are emotionally indifferent to accepted codes of morals" and "make their own rules . . ." [a statement repeated in Heinlein fiction a number of times]. (95)

Thus even Heinlein's sexual wildness can be closely connected to braininess.

Heinlein's elitist rationalism is clearly related to Neoplatonic philosophy, and Plato's Republic is a major key to Heinlein's speculations, though this analogy will not be pursued in this study.

In Glory Road, Heinlein creates what Franklin calls "the ultimate philosopher-king" (149). Her Wisdom, as she is called, is genetically selected, but she also undergoes a comprehensive education. Often Heinlein's ideal leader is a philosopher-king, a super-thinker. In "Gulf", the leader of one band of elite, Plotinian super-thinkers explains that

democracy was fine, for a time, but that now it can't work:

But now, if the race is simply to stay alive, political decisions depend on real knowledge of such things as nuclear physics, planetary ecology, genetic theory, even system mechanics. They aren't up to it Joe. (48)

Griffiths explains that Heinlein is not dogmatic: "To be fair, Heinlein does insist that his readers examine his propositions critically and nowhere more so than when he is studying various communal groups" (110-111). In Time Enough for Love, Heinlein writes: "Morals are your agreement with yourself to abide by your own rules. To Thine own self be true or you spoil the game" (586). In Starship Troopers, Heinlein offers this explanation of moral behavior: "Morals--all correct moral rules--derive from the instinct to survive; moral behavior is survival above the individual level" (147) This view is not very Plotinian, but survival in Heinlein's code may be connected to Plotinian salvation, particularly if to survive is to assure immortality--individually or racially.

All of the ideas in Heinlein's program relate to each other. Heinlein is concerned with the survival of the human race. This survival, he proposes, can best be assured through an emphasis on rationality. Leaders should be the most intelligent, and a hierarchy of intelligence ensues as a result. Social customs and moral choices must also be



based on rationality. Heinlein's style reflects his own demand for competence: he simply relates the necessary details without fuss, without hiding behind any false artistic cover. Thus Heinlein's program hinges on a recognition of his overriding concern for rationality, and an optimistic outlook for the future. His plain style, his allegories of brain power, his optimistic outlook on ascending the ladder of rationality, his elitism, his coolness, his love of cerebration, his interest in aesthetics and politics as fields for rational penetration--all of these concerns place him in what is, as a matter of fact, the oldest and largest of all traditions, and it begins with the Greeks, and is enhanced by Plotinus.

### CHAPTER THREE: PLOTINUS: SOME KEY IDEAS AND ATTITUDES

"Ideas alone lead nowhere. Only ideas about ideas make good fiction, as they make good music, or good science, or for that matter good living"

(Atheling, The Issue at Hand 43).

It would be possible to connect Heinlein's work with several rationalistic and optimistic philosophers: Plato or Aristotle or Aquinas or Kant. But one especially promising figure is Plotinus. A comprehensive summary of the importance of Plotinus is provided by Samuel Enoch Stumpf, who writes:

The decisive bridge between classical philosophy and Augustine would be the writings of Plotinus. But Plotinus nowhere mentions Christianity; his . . . contribution consisted of a fresh version of Plato's philosophy, and . . . is known as Neoplatonism (120).

Stumpf observes that Plotinus writes about a God who, instead of creating, emanates. Utilizing this theory of emanation, Plotinus satisfactorily explains the existence of evil and, at the same time, offers a plan of salvation. Obviously, these three problems are important to Christian philosophy as well, but "What made Plotinus' philosophy distinctive [Stumpf explains] was that he combined a speculative description of the system of reality with a religious doctrine of salvation" (120).

Plotinus's doctrine of emanation begins with the assumption that God is One, eternal, and unchanging.<sup>1</sup> God is also the Nous: rationality. Since to create would require action (therefore, change), God must emanate--radiating from himself much as light shines from the sun.<sup>2</sup> Although all matter then flows from God, it is not equal to God; therefore no stains of pantheistic superstition mar the philosophy. Indeed, as Stumpf points out, nature becomes hierarchial. This is the most shrewd aspect of Plotinus's thought; in fact he holds strictly to the limitations built into the assumption of an eternal, unchanging God better than some Christian thinkers.

If all things flow from God, where is the source of evil? Plotinus knows. Matter is not evil. Evil is distance away from God, but not necessarily physical distance. Just as the parent cannot control the actions of the child issued forth from the body, so God does not directly control his emanations. The good parent may hate the behavior, yet still love the child. Although it might be tempting to assume that God does not or cannot love his creations, Plotinus felt otherwise. God is the Nous: rationality; Plotinus therefore felt God could feel concern for his creatures. Katz observes that "almost all of the ideas that Plotinus finds objectional in the Gnostics have been asserted by himself in one form or another" (289).



The Gnostics felt that matter was evil; so clearly Katz is mistaken. Just as the purity of television or radio transmissions is lost over distance, so the pure influence of God decays farther from Him. The signal is not evil, merely disjointed. Besides, God is logical, and evil is logically necessary in the world to provide contrast, shadings, and intensity. Man would not want to pursue happiness if he had no knowledge of pain. Plotinus's theory of evil thus seems based on solid, logical supports.

The two preceeding Neoplatonist concepts combine to produce a logical and responsible plan of salvation. Since God is the Nous, Plotinus felt that salvation must lie in man's striving to move closer to God; man must make the mental move towards rational thought. J. H. Randall, Jr. asserts: "Plotinus held steadfastly to the conviction that it is reason and not faith that gives men knowledge of the universe, and . . . reason and not faith that can alone bring them salvation" (3). Randall adds that Plotinus saw no need for a mediator between God and man; since God was reason, through reason man could reunite with God (3). The main disturbance in this aspect of Plotinus's thought is his belief in reincarnation. The way to salvation is so difficult that Plotinus sees reincarnation as essential. But it is more satisfactory to assume that after this life on

earth, the soul leaves the limitations of the physical plane and begins the more spiritual, intellectual move towards God. Except for that one instance, the Neoplatonist plan of salvation remains appealing to the modern intellectual, and is very close to Heinlein's views.

All of the doctrines of Plotinus endure because they are firmly based on logic. Plotinus wanted to escape superstition and myth; his philosophy is therefore grounded upon rationality. Stumpf notes:

He [Plotinus] not only described the world but also gave an account of its source, of man's place in it, and of how man overcomes his moral and spiritual difficulties in it. In short, Plotinus developed a doctrine about God as the source of all things and as that to which man must return.  
(120)

Neoplatonism will therefore continue to provide a compelling alternative to (or adaptation of) Christianity for any thinking man. Inge explains this appeal:

. . . our generation is ripe for this kind of religion. It is a very good sign if it is so. For this philosophy of life has nothing to fear from scientific or historical criticism. It is broad-based on personal experience, and buttressed by sound metaphysics. Its morality is pure and elevated; it cares nothing for denominational barriers; it finds ample room for science and art, honouring both; and like Christianity, with which it has so much in common, it gives us a valuation of the good and evil of life, and is so a guide to practical wisdom. I will not speak of 'the religion of the future' . . . but that this is the true line of progress in religion as well as in philosophy, I have no doubt whatsoever. (54-55)

Heinlein's program parallels Plotinus's in many respects. Obviously the emphasis on rationality shared by each is a key point. Plotinus's emanation theory suggests a resulting hierarchy with the intelligent at the top--a theory Heinlein seems fond of. Reunion with God through the exercise of reason explains why the super-intelligent Heinlein heroes assume God-like qualities. Long life is necessary to achieve this great wisdom; Plotinus uses reincarnation, and Heinlein uses science fiction technology to make the same point. Clearly, the two programs are similar. Both are designed to achieve a total guide to reality and life based on a scientific view of reality which avoids superstition, sets the mind boldly free to pursue salvation by its God-like power to theorize, and makes intellect, not love or faith, the pinnacle of the hierarchy of value.

#### CHAPTER FOUR: A PRIME EXAMPLE: STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND

"The Problem is always how to live in a decadent society."

--Robert A. Heinlein  
I Will Fear No Evil (167)

"Men rarely (if ever) manage to dream up a god superior to themselves. Most gods have the manners and morals of a spoiled child."

--Robert A. Heinlein  
Time Enough for Love  
(243-244)

In pondering Heinlein's program, it is, obviously, necessary to single out some major works for special analysis. One good choice is Stranger in a Strange Land, which may be Heinlein's most significant work to date. Panshin quotes Heinlein's own statement of his purpose in writing Stranger in a Strange Land: ". . . to examine every major axiom of Western culture, . . . throw doubt on it--and if possible--to make the antithesis of each axiom appear a possible and perhaps desirable thing-- rather than unthinkable" (173). Heinlein analyzes the decadence in society and offers alternatives. Heinlein manages to examine politics, education, art, family, and most significantly, religion. Sturgeon claims:

The reader who can control his outrage sufficiently to read it all the way through will be left wondering whether he has not after all been given a glimpse of love, of worship, of

honor, and devotion more basic and more pure than anything Earth has seen since the days of Apostolic Christianity (qtd. in Cansler 953).

Cansler realizes that "What Heinlein is doing is showing a contempt for what he believes to be Christianity's falling away from the true gospel of Christ" (952).

Heinlein is not mocking all of Christianity; he obviously admires aspects of Christ and His message. Nor is Heinlein ignorantly contemptuous of other religions; he speaks with familiarity of the sacred writings of many religions (Stranger 205, 294). The organization of Heinlein's Job: A Comedy of Justice is another indication of serious study on Heinlein's part; the parallels with the Biblical Job are striking.<sup>1</sup> Sturgeon notes: "The gaity in that transubstantiation scene at the end [of Stranger] is something that has infuriated some . . . yet it is much closer to the agape, the love-feast of apostolic Christianity . . ." (Bretnor 112).

The opening sentence of Stranger in a Strange Land reads: "Once upon a time there was a Martian named Valentine Michael Smith" (9). Valentine suggests both erotic love and the martyred saint; Michael is keeper of the heavenly gates, the archangelic general of the heavenly soldiers who fight evil; Smith is the "American everyman" (Franklin 128). The name "Michael" means "one who is like God". Heinlein refers to Michael as an Adam "who has never tasted the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil" (171). Not only is Mike



compared with Dionysus; he calls himself Dr. Apollo when he is a magician in a carnival (261). Mike's martyrdom is even equated with the persecution of Christ. Most interesting is when another character in Stranger calls Mike "our Prometheus," the man/god who brought the power of fire and knowledge to man (369).

Mike's parents were crew members of the first manned expedition to Mars; he was the only survivor of that mission. The infant was raised by Martians in a cave.<sup>2</sup> Twenty-five years later, Mike is "rescued" and returned to Earth. Through the aid of a compassionate few, Mike finds refuge from the power plays of government and business in the sanctuary of Jubal Harshaw, "LL.B, M.D., Sc.D., bon vivant, gourmet, sybarite, popular author extraordinary, and neo-pessimist philosopher" (80). Mike displays extraordinary powers, including ~~total~~ recall and speed reading (self taught in one day). He rarely sleeps, is immune to most weather, and has total control of his body, even the so-called involuntary reflexes.<sup>3</sup> The most extraordinary ability Mike has, and the one which critics have the hardest time dealing with, is his heightened mental prowess. Mike can leave his body and walk around with his mind.<sup>4</sup> Mike can make objects or people "become not," totally disappear into nowhere. Levitation and telekinesis are child's play. Mike eventually leaves Jubal's hideaway and joins



the army and the carnival before enrolling in Harvard's divinity school. He then establishes a "religion" and teaches his philosophy or discipline to those willing to learn.<sup>5</sup> Finally, Mike is martyred and is last seen in heaven, working at a desk job.

The education Mike received from the Martians "had been unique . . . The results had taught them more about the human race than that race had yet learned about itself, for Smith had grokked readily things that no human being had ever learned" (Stranger 92). Heinlein writes that Mike's mental control "had already kicked the bottom out of medicine and physics. . . . Harshaw recalled the tragedy that relativity had been for many scientists" (132). Mike has this great mental control because Martian thought is more logical and Plotinian than any human language.

One important concept Mike introduces is "grok." "Grok" literally means "to drink"; it also means "to love," "to hate," and a host of other concepts. Dr. Mahmoud, the semantician, explains:

'Grok' means 'identically equal.' . . . The Martians seem to know instinctively what we learned painfully from modern physics, that observer interacts with observed through the process of observation. 'Grok' means to understand so thoroughly that the observer becomes a part of the observed--to merge, blend, intermarry, lose identity in group experience. It means almost everything that we mean by religion, philosophy, and science--and it means as little to

us as color means to a blind man. (205-206)

Armstrong offers a description of the Nous which sounds similar:

Nous in Plotinus is the totality of being. That is, it is the organic world of ideas, the objects of knowledge, and at the same time, the mind that knows them. It is a perfect unity-in-duality of subject and object, the sphere in the macrocosm corresponding to the Aristotelian psychology which deeply affected Plotinus, the mind becomes what it thinks. (2)

Heinlein's closeness to this position must be accepted. Willis McNelly shrewdly notes that 'grok' also means 'to create' (4). Also, correct moral behavior naturally follows from correct, logical thought (but even the Martians are not omniscient, [414]). Mike believes "A water brother could not lead him into wrongful action" (65). This may seem naive, but Mike also knows "Goodness is not enough, goodness is never enough. That was one of my first mistakes, because among Martians goodness and wisdom are identical" (393). Mike's thesis is highly Plotinian: goodness must be guided by right reasons (also the Catholic position).

Although many critics complain of the promiscuity in Stranger, they miss a key statement: "Jubal, I am physically unable to attempt love with a female who has not shared water with me. . . . Psychic impotence--unless spirits blend as flesh blends" (398). On the same page it is clear that sex between water brothers is heterosexual

only.<sup>6</sup> Kraft notes that "a single bond of love links unlike natures, though the flesh be of earth and the mind ethereal."<sup>7</sup> Kraft continues:

Moreover, the universe itself is forged and maintained by what can only be called an erotic copula. . . . we find that the production of living beings results from a chain of emanations from God that are impregnations as well. (36)

Obviously Heinlein is drawn to Plotinus's emanation theory.

This recognition of the mind's power has obvious ramifications in terms of Plotinian philosophy. Franklin complains that "The belief that mind can at will do almost anything to matter represents the absurdity at the extreme end of the bourgeois definition of freedom and free will" (48). Of course, Heinlein said that that was the purpose of the book: to highlight opposites of the standard mores. Panshin insists that "the religion has no point for anybody" (101), and joins Franklin and Rose in condemning the elitist attitude they feel is implied (Panshin 102; Franklin 136; Rose 151). These critics miss key aspects of Heinlein's work. Rose at least notes that followers must first improve themselves, but that is as far as he goes. Heinlein repeatedly stresses that Mike's movement is a discipline, a language school which teaches logic (314).

One other important phrase is "Thou art God." Mike

explains that his is not a purely optimistic philosophy:

It's not a message of hope and cheer, Jubal. It's a defiance--and an unafraid unabashed assumption of personal responsibility. . . .[few] understood me and accepted the bitter along with the sweet. . . . No matter what I said they insisted on thinking of God as something outside themselves. Something that yearns to take every indolent moron to His breast and comfort him. The notion that the effort has to be their own ...and that the trouble they are in is all their own doing ... is one they can't or won't entertain." (400)

It is noteworthy that for Plotinus, men must save themselves. Rose (changing his mind again) notes that Mike has "gained omniscience and omnipotence by means of applied science" (36-37). Mike admits that he made mistakes, but Rose's point is valid. It is through reason that Mike gains control of himself and the world around him; it is through reason that god-like powers are assumed. Inge explains, "What really happens is that the higher forms of life exhibit higher grades of value, and approach more nearly to the life of God (or Spirit) himself. A new organ, consciousness, has been evolved gradually for this purpose" (47). Plotinus says that the Proficient "may even attain to the 'possession' of the God-head in an ineffable act of identification becoming Uniate, one with God, actually God" (MacKinna, xxxii).

Franklin suggests that Heinlein contradicts himself:

Heinlein seems torn between two quite

contradictory conceptions of the relations between mind and matter. On the one side he has faith in science and technology--the rational, systematic, developing accumulation of human knowledge which permits a progressive enlargement of human consciousness, of control over the material environment, of potential freedom. On the other side, he rejects science and embraces wishful thinking, the direct, unfettered, immediate control of matter by mind. (52)

Franklin does not see that the contradiction is more apparent than real. True, Heinlein can and does argue the opposite side on almost any issue, sometimes in the same books, but it is different characters arguing, or the author being objective. Snow has said that science fiction is the place where pure science and humanities merge. Heinlein is like Jubal Harshaw to the extent that both are wise enough to know that they don't know everything (83, 93). Besides, to explore the potential of the human mind is not "wishful thinking"--not with over eighty per cent of the mind uncharted. Furthermore, Tudor Jones, in his "Interpretation of Euken's Philosophy," dismisses any contradiction between reason and spirituality:

They [other philosophers] have conceived of spiritual life as something entirely different from the mental life. It is different, but only as the bud is different from the blossom; it means at the religious level a greater unfolding of life which has been present at every stage in the unfolding of civilization and culture. (Inge 51-52)

A better objection comes from the many critics who are



appalled at the development of a mass personality, or mass mind in Heinlein's book. "Thou are God" is an imperfect translation of the Martian concept; this idea too is stressed a number of times. A key passage explains that individuality remains:

The solitary loneliness of predestined free will was then his and with it Martian serenity to embrace, cherish, savor its bitterness, accept its consequences. With tragic joy he knew that this cusp was his, not Jill's. His water brother could teach, admonish, guide--but choice at cusp was not shared. Here was "ownership" beyond sale, gift, hypothecation; owner and grokked inseparable. He eternally was the action he had taken at cusp.

Now that he knew himself to be self he was free to grok ever closer to his brothers, merge without let. Self's integrity was and is and ever had been. (252)

If anything, Heinlein is too often criticised for his ultra-individualism, his anarchism. The Puppet Masters, and the Little People in both "Methuselah's Children" and Time Enough for Love all illustrate Heinlein's distaste for any loss of individuality. Inge explains a similiar concept of Plotinus:

The Soul can only save itself by losing itself--by forgetting the distinction between 'I' and 'Not-I'; by reaching out in all directions after fuller experience, wider activity, richer affections. There is no natural limit to its expansion; the Soul is potentially all embracing. In knowing its world it comes to know itself, and in knowing itself it knows its world; the two processes are interdependent and really one. The Soul creates in knowing, and knows by creating; it stamps itself on Matter, and is reflected in



Matter. But the soul itself, and its world, are wholly dependent on that great spiritual world of external existence and external activity, which are the object of the Soul's worship, the source from which it flowed, and the goal to which it strives to return. (38-39)

The critics of Heinlein need to think more deeply and understand that scientific objectivity does not rule out mystical possibilities, and that communal mergings do not rule out fierce individualism. G. M. Hopkins and D. H. Lawrence had no trouble in uniting these divergent modalities, and neither does Heinlein.

Heinlein's optimism is important. Dorothy Fontana wrote a Star Trek episode, "Charlie X," which is also about a human, orphaned shortly after birth, who had been raised by a very advanced alien civilization. Charlie was given "powers" by his guardians in order to survive. He, too, can make things "not;" he too has extraordinary psi powers. But Charlie cannot adjust to human society; he was not taught how to think logically. Of course, Charlie is seventeen years old; he is a confused adolescent; the parallels are made clear. Mike, on the other hand, was twenty-five when he was rescued. Star Trek occasionally subordinates rationality to emotion; Heinlein never does. Although Franklin sees a "nonsensical confusion between thinking 'better' in the sense of more skillfully, and 'better' in the sense of more morally," (95) Heinlein's reasoning is

sound. In the Plotinian system, rationality is identified with God, and thereby with morality. Heinlein also makes Mike's powers the result of logical thought--not inexplicable gifts.

To correctly interpret Stranger, an awareness of the power of the intelligence in Heinlein's program is essential. Mike can work "miracles" because he thinks better. Mike establishes a discipline to share his knowledge with others. Right thinking necessarily implies right action, since actions are consciously chosen. Strong, rational individuality frees each to empathize more closely with others without compromising the self. Mike becomes a god because he, and everyone, has the potential for rationality within him all along--an idea close to the Plotinian concept of divine rationality. Thus this complex work is based on solid, logical precepts about the power of the mind, and the way in which science and religion become one. If the Christian mind cannot yet understand what a proper view this is, the Christian cannot blame Pythagoras, Plato, Aristotle, Plotinus, or Heinlein.

## CHAPTER FIVE: OTHER IMPORTANT WORKS BY HEINLEIN

"I have left in lies and unlikely stories on the assumption that the lies a man tells tell more truth about him--when analyzed--than does 'truth'."

---Time Enough for Love (xii)

Heinlein has written a number of short stories and novels which are often overlooked, or dismissed as nonsense. Many of these stories contain elements of Plotinian thought which fit consistently with the rest of Heinlein's work.

The Moon Is a Harsh Mistress is generally considered the last of Heinlein's "good" books. Miller and Smith characterize the novel:

This novel suggests that individual freedom is a survival value, and the plot involves the revolution of freedom-loving colonists on the Moon against the authoritarian rule of Earth. A principle character, Professor De la Paz, defends a version of anarchism against the Marxist-leaning heroine, Wyoming Knott, in an argument that students find far more clear and consistent than examples drawn from the traditional philosophic literature. (10)

This argument comprises chapter six of The Moon Is a Harsh Mistress. Professor de la Paz asks "under what circumstances may the State justly place its welfare above that of a citizen" and "Under what circumstances is it moral for a group to do that which is not moral for a member of

that group to do alone" (63). The professor then explains: "It is the key question. . . . A radical question that strikes to the root of the whole dilemma of government" (63). This novel is centrally concerned with the question of ideal government, like Plato's Republic, and the action consists mostly of argument. Heinlein's novels since 1960 tend to be rather long on mental action and short on physical action, partly because of plot constraints. Heinlein, however, seems to be more concerned with presenting a message, of provoking thought in these novels. Since he continues to use protagonists who are very intelligent and very opinionated, plot development tends to take the form of a Platonic dialogue and storytelling. Lazarus Long explains in Time Enough for Love:

I did not hesitate to use fiction in teaching them. Fiction is a faster way to get a feeling for alien patterns of human behavior than is non-fiction; it is one stage short of actual experience. . . . and I recall another teacher who used parables in putting over ideas.  
(176-177)

So, the amount of dialectic in The Moon Is a Harsh Mistress is important in understanding's Heinlein's later works, and his concern with ideal government is particularly manifested through his intelligent, competent, elite leaders.

Another important point made in the novel is explained

by Ketterer:

We can now see precisely why the Professor's "long-range plan" "was based on destroying old catapult" (p.297)--literally in order to prevent further grain shipments to Terra, but symbolically in order to signalize the destruction of that old, closed mental system involving a dependency on Terra. Now a new world of mind, a closed mental system totally disconnected from Terra and symbolized by the second computer and the second catapult head, can take over. (155)

Heinlein seems constantly concerned with developing new, improved ways of thinking. A corollary is Heinlein's emphasis on language. Rose notes: "In both Stranger and an earlier short story, "Gulf," a new streamlined (but also richer) language must be learned . . . " (49). Heinlein dislikes closed minds. Although Heinlein is an engineer, he leaves open the possibility of psi phenomena, and other types of "magic" in his work. In Time Enough for Love Heinlein writes, "one man's 'magic' is another man's engineering. 'Supernatural' is a null word" (250). In Waldo, Lost Legacy, Magic, Inc., and Methuselah's Children, Heinlein explores societies which are based on "magic." Lazarus attempts to explain the distinction between science and magic to a computer:

What is "magic"? . . . [Computers] are more magical than any 'magic' in fairy tales, and it does no good to say that you are a product of science, rather than magic, in speaking to kids who have no idea what is meant by "science"--and I wasn't sure that the distinction was valid even when I was explaining the distinction. In my wanderings I



have run across magic many times--which simply says that I have seen wonders I could not explain. (176)

Heinlein is obviously concerned with the world of "mystical" experience and the necessity for improved mental activity.

Other important aspects of Heinlein's program are found in this novel. First, he is concerned with manners; his protagonists all recognize the importance of honorific behavior. A love for learning is also critical. Like other Heinlein protagonists, Professor de la Paz taught anything--even if he didn't know much more than the student did. The Professor would stay a few lessons ahead, or would locate a new teacher--and continue to learn with his student (24). (Many Heinlein heroes have a string of degrees after their name; many simply read a great deal about everything.) Finally, in The Moon Is a Harsh Mistress, the Professor is nominated as king. This fondness for the philosopher-king type of rule is also indulged in Time Enough for Love, as are all these other elements.

Panshin complains that Heinlein's characters are all the same. But this is not surprising in a philosophic novelist, and all the characters do have individual personalities. Mike Smith in Stranger in a Strange Land and Mike the computer in The Moon Is a Harsh Mistress share a number of traits in addition to the same name, just as the novels develop many similar concepts. In both novels, humor



is suggested as a necessary component of "humaness." Both Mikes must develop a sense of humor in the process of becoming humanized. Both characters assume the name "Adam" at some point in their development. Both wrestle with the nature of fiction, though the computer catches on to the distinction more readily. Heinlein's description of Mike the computer could also fit Mike the Stranger: "He was the weirdest mixture of unsophisticated baby and wise old man. . . . no human rearing, no experience in human sense-- and more stored data than a platoon of genuises" (11).

Self-aware computers are a common feature in Heinlein's recent novels. Heinlein has a character in The Moon Is a Harsh Mistress explain: "Psychologists assert it happens automatically whenever a brain acquires certain very high number of associational paths. Can't see it matters whether paths are protein or platinum" (8). Time Enough For Love has a self-aware computer, Minerva, who elects to become human. The personality of Athena assumes the functions of the computer. Dora, the ship's computer is also self-aware. This is an important link to Plotinian ideology. Even though Minerva gives up some thinking ability to become human, she also frees herself from the "body" of a mere machine, and finds new expression as a human. Kent notes that Martianus, a medieval Neoplatonic writer, also identifies Minerva (and Apollo) with Nous (33).

Heinlein's style also reflects his own emphasis

on orderly thought-- a Plotinian value. Rogers complains that Time Enough for Love "is written in a moderately realistic manner with little attention paid to metaphorical, rhetorical, and literary techniques" (Olander and Greenberg 227). Rogers is confused. The stories told by Lazarus Long are all thinly disguised allegory. According to the Holman Handbook, the Aristotelian concept of rhetoric was "a manner of effectively organizing material for the presentation of truth, for an appeal to the intellect through speech" (380). Rhetorical criticism examines the elements "employed by the author to impose upon the reader the author's view of the meaning" (Holman 380-381); Heinlein is too often accused (especially in this novel) of being too didactic. Letson (in Olander and Greenburg) correctly states:

I can offer a view of the book as a carefully constructed, consciously didactic, philosophical novel that deals with important ideas which Heinlein first investigated in earlier works and attempts to integrate in Time Enough for Love.  
(195)

Letson is not alone. In "Lazarus, Come Forth from That Tomb!" Christopher insists that Time Enough for Love belongs to Northrup Frye's anatomy class of fiction: "extroverted (i.e., dealing with society) and intellectual (i.e., dealing with it in terms of ideas" (191). Christopher continues: "Further, Frye says that the short form of the anatomy is the dialogue. Just as Plato's

Republic is a fairly long example of this 'short form,' so also are the first 466 pages of Time Enough for Love" (192). Parkin-Speer complains that Time Enough for Love is another step down in Heinlein's decline because characterization and plot are sacrificed to the didactic" (221). Lewis said that that was the way it should be in science fiction (108-109), and it is certainly proper in the philosophic novel.

Parkin-Speer continues, saying that Heinlein "has apparently forgotten what a writer cannot afford to forget--possibly enlightening ideas must be balanced with pleasure for the reader" (222). Parkin-Speer has apparently forgotten that enlightening ideas are the best form of entertainment to the intelligent, creative person. Heinlein's phenomenal sales record continues to suggest that his public agrees.

Although many critics complain of the orgies at Lazarus's colony of elite thinkers, they ignore the fact that everyone is intelligent, and they ignore the nightly intellectual discussions. Each night, one person is designated 'stimulator' and an important issue is discussed by all, such as the distinction between heredity and environment in chapter fourteen. Obviously, Heinlein uses a kind of Platonic dialogue to deliver his entertaining message.

The style is not the only Platonic influence in Time Enough for Love. Lazarus explains that long life is important, but his emphasis is on intelligence (397).

Heinlein is clear in his Plotinian condemnation of stupidity:

Stupidity cannot be cured with money, or through education, or by legislation. Stupidity is not a sin, the victim can't help being stupid. But stupidity is the only universal capital crime, the sentence is death, there is no appeal, and execution is carried out automatically and without pity. (246)

Lazarus Long is wise, even though he objects to the label. In his long life (over 2000 years), he has practiced more than fifty professions, has been almost everywhere, and has seen more than any other man. In many respects he resembles Wallace Stevens's "impossible possible man."<sup>1</sup> Because of his long life (and great progeny), nearly everyone living is his descendant. This reflects Plotinus's emanation theory, as does Lazarus's return to his childhood, his mother, and the place he was conceived. This journey, accomplished via time travel (a philosophic concept, not a scientific one, but none-the-less a staple of science fiction), is reminiscent of the need to return to the One, the Nous in Plotinus's ideology. Inge explains that for Plotinus, "Soul resembles the higher principle in being irresistibly impelled to create--to create after the image of its own creator" (34). Kent notes that for Martianus, "the universe is a great hall of memory, full of symbolic figures and personages. Now, there is always the possibility of walking through that hall more than once, or stepping back and taking another

look" (33).

The Number of the Beast-- is also dismissed as frivolous, but it too reflects aspects of Plotinus's philosophy. Franklin characterizes the novel:

. . . the very heart of The Number of the Beast--, animating all its disparate parts, is the theory that fiction, whether realistic, scientific, or fantastic--is just as real as anything else. And the operating principle of this theory is that reality itself is a kind of fiction, the creation of the solipsistic mind.

Hilda speculates about the theory as a form of science based on the notion that "human thought exists as quanta". . . (ch.33). We are discovering them in the process of discovering an ontological truth that most ficitional characters are never permitted to learn. (206-207)

Heinlein may be characterized as solipsistic, but it is just as possible to describe him in terms of Neoplatonism. If ideas (forms) can emanate from God and eventually become matter, and if God is rationality, then it seems that a highly rational creature can perform a similiar action. Nous itself is a kind of solipsistic mind. Inge explains Plotinus's view:

The laws which the scientist thinks that he finds in nature are the work of his own mind, which notwithstanding finds itself in those objects which are its own image, and more remotely the image of its own Author. (34-35)

This shrewd idea is extremely close to Heinlein's logic.

Franklin's analysis of this novel is perceptive.



Libby announces that she has been "wholeheartedly converted" both to "Jake's six-axis plenum of universes to the awful Number of the Beast" and to Hilda's pantheistic multiperson solipsism, and declares that together they "constitute the ultimate philosophy: science, religion, mathematics, art, in one grand package" (ch. 44).  
 . . . All the essential elements of the apocalypse appear in The Number of the Beast--:  
 . . . the faithful elect are saved and go to abide with their creator[s] in a new heaven and new earth [utopia]. Above all, apocalypse means revelation.

The single chapter comprising that final "L'Envoi" is entitled "Rev. XXII:13." Some may find this a bit presumptuous, for Revelation XXII:13 consists of this declaration by Jesus Christ: "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last." Heinlein is here intimating that the ultimate creator--not just of one universe but of all the alternative universes is the creator of fiction. (Perhaps this accounts for the unusual exclamation in the midst of the characters' discussion of Heinlein: "'My God . . . !'") Scripture is interpreted to support this deification of the author. . . . This variant of solipsism not only deifies authors, but also places at the highest pinnacle in the pantheon of authors the creator of the most imaginative fiction, such as The Number of the Beast--, with its  $6^6$  alternative universes. (209-210)

Aristotle, of course, said poetry was more philosophic than philosophy because it could imagine ideal states. Inge provides the Neoplatonic view that Spirit is creative:

By an inner necessity of its nature, it [Spirit] must produce a world after its likeness. God is thus the Author of Nature, in the same sense, nearly, in which a man might be said to be the author of his own photograph [or novel]. (32)

Thus Heinlein's theories of solipsistic creation of fictional worlds are sharply related to original creations



of Plotinian Nous: any genuine power of creation is in some sense identical with the original power of creation; and fictions of one stage can become truths at another.

These, then, are some of the items noted in this rather loose sampling of miscellaneous works by Heinlein: a heavy stress on cerebral action and dialogue at the expense of plot and character; an emphasis on an elite intelligentsia; an interest in magical and occult phenomena which might have a scientific basis; an interest in the pure logic of artificial intelligence as it becomes conscious and humanized; an emphasis on teachers, and learning; a plain style behind which allegories are on parade; pointed didacticism; the theme of stupidity as the ultimate sin; the idea that human thought coming from fictional regions can go on to have a Nous-like "real" shaping power in the actual world; and also some names (like "Minerva") which have Plotinian color. All of these interests of Heinlien can be seen as adjuncts to a general plan analogous to that of Plotinus: bringing mankind higher and higher to rational laws and theories in an elitist mode dominated by scientific realism, yet friendly to mystical and spiritual upper levels, and sharply challenging to Christian programs.

## CHAPTER SIX: SUMMARY: THE HEINLEIN PROGRAM

"Despite the crapehangers, romanticists, and anti-intellectuals, the world steadily grows better because the human mind, applying itself to environment, makes it better."

--Robert A. Heinlein  
The Door into Summer (158)

The claim that Plotinus may be relevant to the Heinlein program has been explored. Although it is difficult to state an author's position on anything merely on the basis of what his characters have to say, it seems clear that the ideology repeated in Heinlein's many stories resembles Neoplatonism. Some readers may still be skeptical. In the light of what has been said about Heinlein, it would be informative to consider nine core beliefs of Plotinus as they are formulated by Reese.

Reese states his first point:

(1) The system of Plotinus can be viewed either from the standpoint of the individual person caught within a space-time world and seeking salvation [escape? understanding?] from it, or from the standpoint of the logical progression in which reality emerged from a primal unity. In the former case, the system becomes a guidebook to the divine, and hence a religious philosophy. In the second case, the system is an effort to explain how, out of the One, an eternal principle of unity, the temporal order could have arisen. (445)

Heinlein has many characters caught within a peculiar space-time world. His time travel stories (noteably "By His

Bootstraps" and "All you Zombies--") aptly explore the problems of a closed space-time loop. The characters are often left speculating about the first principle, the original cause. In Time Enough for Love, Lazarus Long finally escapes the limitations of a single time-field. In The Number of the Beast--, Heinlein introduces a gadget which allows travel along any spacetime continuum, and his characters explore literally thousands of possible universes.

Resse's second premise is as follows:

(2) The One is the undifferentiated divine out of whose being the other elements of reality are derived by emanation. The emanation, logical rather than temporal, occurs due to the refulgence of the original principle. (445)

Heinlein proposes in The Number of the Beast-- that universes are generated by fiction writers, who in turn generate fictional writers, who in turn generate more universes, ad infinitum. Heinlein writes:

If you read it correctly it's all in the Bible. 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.' Could anyone ask for a plainer statement of the self-evident fact that nothing exists until someone imagines it and thereby gives it being, reality? (508)

Of course it is entirely possible that Heinlein is indulging in a marvelous joke, that he does not for a moment believe

his own theory, but it has often been said that any writer's characters are merely extensions of himself. Heinlein's description of author as creator suggests that from one great mind can spring all of creation, and this theory sounds similiar to Plotinus's--though it has a modern tilt.

Reese makes his third point:

(3) The initial emanation is that of the Nous or Intelligence. This is the realm of forms of Plato. The Nous is a reflection into multiplicity of the eternal unity, and it continues to exist--as does everything else--through the power of the One. (445)

Heinlein has made it clear that he does believe in the power of intelligence. As far as "mutiplicity of the eternal unity" is concerned, Heinlein writes in the Notebooks of Lazarus Long (Time Enough For Love): "'God split himself into a myriad parts that he might have friends.' This may not be true, but it sounds good--and is no sillier than any other theology" (347). Heinlein often expresses disapproval of philosophers and theologians, but he attempts to answer many of the same questions in his own stories, and he has a Nous model.

Reese explains a fourth point of Plotinus's system:

(4) The second emanation is that of the World Soul. This is a principle of life and active intelligence. It exists in contemplation of the Nous. And like the demiurge of Plato the forms become the patterns of its creation in the space-time world. That world is, in point of

fact, its inner existence, since the world soul contains the world as its body. Time is the record of the world soul's attempts to embody in matter the fullness of eternal and infinite being. (445)

This is merely an expansion of what has been already said.

Heinlein's exceptionally intelligent, wise Old Ones

(Martians) do little except contemplate art and wisdom.

Slusser correctly notes:

Martians are basically Platonists: they always deal in shadows. For Heinlein, however, physical contact is necessary to maintain the energy of life. Man also has a spiritual level, and Mike finds that the force within him contains nothing alien, but derives from man himself. (30)

Reese says "forms become the patterns of its creation in the space-time world" (445). Again, this sounds like the universes that Heinlein suggests are created by fiction writers. When Reese says that "Time is the record of the world soul's attempts to embody in matter the fullness of eternal and infinite being" (445), one is reminded of the often repeated phrase "Waiting Is" from Stranger in a Strange Land. "Waiting Is" suggests that with the fullness of time, right action, proper events, and knowledge itself will be manifested. This aspect of Heinlein's novel thus matches this point of Plotinus. The soul moves toward fullness of knowledge.

Reese's fifth point is about the nature of evil:



(5) The final emanation in the series is that of matter itself which, devoid of form, is the closest approach to non-being. The evil in the world, and the evil in man, are viewed as a necessary concomitant of the material principle. (445)

Neither Plotinus nor Heinlein suggests that matter, in and of itself, is evil. For Plotinus, evil may be found in matter only because matter is so far removed from the Nous, the One, the original source. Thus, evil is far away from the source of pure knowledge. Heinlein suggests the same idea. Heinlein writes "Evil is essentially stupid" ("Gulf" 62). Evil is thus equated with non-intelligence, and again Heinlein and Plotinus seem in agreement. Evil is a matter of ignorance and distance from light.

Resse states the fifth point:

(6) Man, then, combining in himself the material and spiritual orders, is in an uncomfortable position. He has a longing for the eternal forms and for the One, and yet he is caught within a body. The means of his liberation is contemplation, intellectual and spiritual at once. Furthermore, the liberation may require more than a single lifetime. (445)

Heinlein again parallels Plotinus. In his Science Fiction in Dimension (97) Panshin remarks that "Heinlein hasn't displayed unheard-of-powers to us. . . ." Although Panshin later complains of just that, Heinlein is consistent. In "Gulf" Heinlein says that "Supermen are superthinkers; anything else is a side issue" (45). Ten

years later he expressed the same idea in Stranger in a Strange Land. Ash explains:

. . . Michael Smith is not in any sense a mutant. He has simply been taught by his Martian parents how to read minds and to exercise other innate abilities--a teaching which he is able to transmit to his followers. (141-142)

Mike is out ahead rationally, just as Plotinus envisions. Slusser agrees: "Mike informs us that his religion is one of works and individual accomplishment. The pathway to salvation is a willingness to learn Martian" (27). Thus salvation, or "liberation," involves logical thought. It took the wisdom of Lazarus Long combined with the computers Minerva and Dora to first develop the escape of time-travel; Jake Borroughs thought long and hard before he developed his space-time machine. Plotinus's suggestion that several lifetimes may be necessary to salvation often bothers critics, but Heinlein, using the science fictional tool of extrapolation of medical technology, avoids any hint of reincarnation. When man can live hundreds of years, it has the same effect: an increase in wisdom and understanding, which is the critical matter for both Plotinus and Heinlein.

Reese continues:

(7) Plotinus finds evidence of the One diffused in the world of our experience. The existence of anything whatever requires a unity of parts; and this unity can come from no other source than the

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 Plotinian analysis of beauty is  
 of the whole. In this sense an  
 for God is implicit in the  
 in Heinlein's work. "The  
 Nathan Hoag" sees this world as a  
Job: A Comedy of Justice has gods  
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(8) Similarly, the Plotinian analysis of beauty is traced to a unity of the whole. In this sense an aesthetic argument for God is implicit in the Enneads. (445)

Beauty and art are important in Heinlein's work. "The Unpleasant Profession of Jonathan Hoag" sees this world as a creation of a poor artist; Job: A Comedy of Justice has gods as practicing artists. Theodore Sturgeon praises Heinlein's perception of artistic principles. Sturgeon reports that in "The Year of the Jackpot" the "logical, chrome-plated" hero is asked if he believes in life after death. The hero says without hesitation "There must be. If there wasn't--it would be . . . bad art." Sturgeon says, "I cannot express to you how much I like that" (Bretnor 111). Heinlein thus examines the world in terms of an artistic creation. Heinlein does not specifically argue that Beauty implies God, but Heinlein's beautiful women are all extraordinarily intelligent, and he almost deifies his women.<sup>1</sup>

Reese's final point is important:

(9) Finally, Plotinus held that the object known must be identical with the knowing act. Thus, he offered an identity theory of truth. If the

identity does not exist, neither does truth. What truth affirms, it must also be. (445)

This point is given particular expression in Heinlein's Stranger in a Strange Land. Perhaps the most well-known concept developed by Heinlein is "Grokking". Pielke explains:

[Mike Smith's] conservatism, or deontological reasoning, is such an overwhelming presence that it's likely to be overlooked. It has to do with his ability to "grok," perhaps the most significant concept in the book. More than merely intuitive insight, but certainly including it, grokking is the ability to empathize, to merge with, to become one with a person, object, or situation. The identification is so total that the true essence of the grokked object is known with absolute certainty.

Having had this capacity developed in him by the Martians, Mike is eventually able to know right, wrong, good, and bad with unerring accuracy, for these moral terms designate essential (but nonempirical) properties. As such their presence or absence must be intuited in some sense. (157)

Heinlein also suggests that there may be little difference between fact and fiction. Mike Smith and his Martian guardians are unfamiliar with fiction; Mike does not understand why he cannot talk to Shakespeare's Romeo; Mike cannot understand lying.<sup>2</sup> "One can speak wrongly only by accident" (Stranger 137). Franklin suggests that "on Mars . . . the highest art seems to be the manipulation of interplanetary reality" (134). The best example of this element of Plotinus's philosophy is

reflected in Heinlein's The Number of the Beast--, where all fictions are revealed as truth. Here Heinlein asks: "Who is more real? Homer or Ulysses? Shakespeare or Hamlet? Burroughs or Tarzan?" (509) Heinlein even titles chapter 34 "--all my dreams do come true!" (The Number of the Beast--).

It is evident that Heinlein's metaphysics are similar to the philosophy of Plotinus. In both cases there is a scientifically oriented effort to make reasoning and rational imaginings the key to reality and salvation. Assuming then that it is valid to include Plotinian themes in interpreting Heinlein's essential strategy, other aspects of that program may be summarized. First, Heinlein's stress on optimism is refreshing. Optimism is necessary to any plan of salvation; too many contemporary novelists have no such plan. Heinlein's stress on sane, healthy, responsible people who must solve problems by reasoning is another vital element of his work. Problems can be solved; this optimistic vision also recognizes the power of reason as a force which can control and shape the world. The creative powers of the mind assume great importance, particularly in his more recent novels. Hull summarizes the questions raised in science fiction:

The practical question of how to live, how to cope with our mechanization, technology,



over-population, scarce resources, pollution, human orneriness; this is entirely inseparable from the ethical and moral issues of personal freedom and responsibility. (41)

Hull explains that in a Heinlein novel, "Not only do we have humanity justifying its ways to God, but elevating the listener-reader to the position of judge" (45). The reader is asked to consider carefully reasoned alternatives to traditional patterns of behavior. Heinlein combines an appreciation of the erotic, of family, of aesthetics, and of morality into an adventure of the intelligence. Intelligence is the key to survival of the race, and of salvation. Thus, a hierarchy where the most intelligent rule is established in many novels. Hull suggests:

contrary to the most widely accepted critical theories, the Heinlein addict reads his work, not in spite of the sermons Heinlein crafts, but actually for the pleasure of the challenge of considering the moral and political questions Heinlein raises.

Hull is correct. Heinlein uses a plain style and Platonic dialogue to present perceptive ideas about vital philosophical questions. This plain style should not be dismissed; it is deceptively elegant, and has been employed by successful American writers from Thoreau and Twain to Hemingway and Dreiser.

Although Heinlein's style is interesting, Heinlein's ideas are most important. Heinlein's overwhelming emphasis

on rationality spawns his political theories, his concerns for family, for morality, for sex, and for survival. An understanding of Heinlein's complex novels is enhanced by a careful relation of his program to Plotinian metaphysics. Just as Plotinus issued a total challenge to Christian thought by raising high the concepts of Nous and emanation to achieve his peculiar blend of science and mysticism, so does Heinlein attempt a total challenge to orthodox thought along the same lines. From Pythagoras and Plato to Plotinus and Heinlein, a tradition of rational mysticism is manifested. If Heinlein understands that this tradition has a great destiny in human evolution, and is indeed the tradition of the future, then this may be said of Heinlein: as a philosophic novelist, he has wisdom and true insight.

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"Requiem" (1940), "The Long Watch" (1949, "Gentlemen,  
Be Seated!" (1947), "The Black Pits of Luna" (1948),  
"'It's Great to be Back!'" (1947), "'--We Also Walk  
Dogs'" (1941), "Searchlight" (1962), "Ordeal in Space"  
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## NOTES

### Preface

<sup>1</sup> Robinson writes in "R. A. H!" (113), "(I know, on the cover of the book it says The Number of the Beast, without quotes or dash; that is the publisher's title. I prefer Heinlein's.)" So do I.

### Chapter One

<sup>1</sup> This definition covers almost all science fiction; Heinlein says to cover all science fiction "it is necessary only to strike out the word 'future'" (Knight 9).

<sup>2</sup> This quotation may be found in Gordon Haddon Clark's The Philosophy of Science and Belief in God (Nutley, New Jersey: The Craig Press, 1964), 57-58. Clark is citing Karl Pearson's Grammar of Science, 24.

<sup>3</sup> Heinlein said in his Guest of Honor Speech at the 1941 World Science Fiction Convention (Denver):

I should say what I mean by the scientific method. Since I have to make the definition in terms of words, I can't be as clear as I otherwise might be, if I were able to make an extensional definition on it. But I mean a comparatively simple thing by the scientific method: the ability to look at what goes on around you...listen to what you hear...observe...note facts...delay your judgement...and make your own predictions. That's all, really all there is to the scientific method: To be able to distinguish facts from non-facts."  
(Panshin and Panshin 143-144)

Heinlein's idea of a "Fair Witness" is also important. A fair witness has total recall, is totally objective, and has developed "the cold unyielding discipline of an Old One" (Stranger in a Strange Land, 145). These people are trained

in Heinlein's scientific method: they observe everything, and can collect data efficiently on which conclusions may later be drawn.

<sup>4</sup> Wilhelm, Nebula Award Stories, Nine, np.

<sup>5</sup> Atheling, in The Issue at Hand, explains:

The lecture technique is generally taboo for fiction, especially in the hands of new writers, and only two science fiction writers have managed to get away with it and make the reader like it, Heinlein being the other. (90)

The other is Lewis Padgett. Spider Robinson should also be included.

## Chapter Two

<sup>1</sup> Heinlein is often accused of being a solipsist; he refers to the philosophy in almost every novel since Stranger (the one exception being Friday). In Stranger, in one of the dialogues set in heaven, a senior angel notes that Mike's name "has been scratched on the Millennial Solipsist Tournament . . . [but] Mike is one of the most eager Solipsism players in the sector" (284).

<sup>2</sup> Heinlein writes in Knight ("Science Fiction: Its Nature, Faults and Virtues") that Socrates's Apologia is a major influence (28). This is the only time Heinlein directly cites a Greek philosopher as a major influence, although he refers to Plato and others in his stories. Samuel R. Delany suggests in his "Critical Methods: Speculative Fiction" (Clareson 278-291) other influences:

. . . part of the mystical optimism that pervades so much of SF is a product of a process that we can see in the ending of Shaw's Man and Superman, Twain's Mysterious Stranger . . . Poe's Eureka, a process shared by such SF classics

as Heinlein's Stranger in a Strange Land. (281)

However, Plato and Aristotle called for the new man, the man who comes from shadow into light, the superior man; thus voices such as those of Shaw and Twain derive from Greek concepts. References to Twain are prominent in Heinlein's work.

### Chapter Three

<sup>1</sup> If God is perfection, then He cannot change, since that change would imply a move away from (or more toward) the ideal state of perfection.

<sup>2</sup> Another example would be as radio waves. Close to the source they are sharp and clear; as the receiver gains more distance from the source, the signal becomes weaker.

### Chapter Four

<sup>1</sup> As in the wisdom literature tradition, where proverbs of right behavior and knowledge are presented, there is a literary framework around the principle material of the work. The principle materials of each frame are dialogues wherein the issues of the tales are raised. The dialogues themselves are highly structured. In the opening of Heinlein's Job and the Biblical Job, the hero is described as a good, pious, righteous man. A "joke" is played on each Job; there are conversations in heaven between God and "various others." The Satan--a title meaning "the Accuser," not a personal name--appears in each. The same questions are raised in each: "Can man know God?" "If God is God, can he be Good? If God is Good can he be God?" "Can God be God is he is not omnipotent?" The price of self-respect is also examined. It is important to note Heinlein's full title: Job: A Comedy of Justice. The nature of comedy (a feeling of incongruity followed by a sense of well-being is one adequate definition) and the nature of Justice (a restoration of order, the way comedies always end) is carefully explored in Heinlein's novel. Many of Heinlein's other novels (especially Time Enough for Love) can fit nicely into the wisdom literature tradition.

<sup>2</sup> This may be a subtle allusion to Plato's allegory, or it may simply be a demand of the story. (In Red Planet, Heinlein has Martians living underground.) Mars is also described as a land of the dead in Red Planet and Podkayne of Mars, since the Martian civilization is dying. Kraft refers to the "visionary force of Plato's image of the universe in the Myth of Er, that distanced contemplation of the soul in the country of the dead" (36).

<sup>3</sup> Cansler notes:

Call it the art of "realism" or whatever, Heinlein states the concepts the story is based on so simply and factually that even though they are not facts at all the reader accepts them as such. When Heinlein wants to show that Mike can control his body to such an extent that his heart hardly beats, he does not bog down the story with implausible mishmush--he merely shows Mike with his body under control. (950)

Liquor also has no effect on Mike, unless he wants it to (Stranger 392).

<sup>4</sup> Mike is at first upset when he walks on grass, until he learns that grass is happy when walked on, that it is their "proper being" (65). This idea sounds like Plotinus, who writes: "Those that deny the happy life to the plants on the ground that they lack sensation are really denying it to all living things" (41; 1.4).

<sup>5</sup> Mike emphasizes that his discipline is not religious:

Let's say it's not a religion. It is a church, in every legal and moral sense. But we're not trying to bring people to God; you can't say it in Martian. We're not trying to save souls, souls can't be lost. We're not trying to get people to have faith, what we offer is not faith--but truth--truth they can check. . . . But they have to learn Martian. That's the hitch--finding people honest enough to believe what they see, willing to work hard--it is hard--to learn the language it must be taught in. The truth can't be stated in English any more that Beethoven's Fifth can be. (330)



Heinlein explains that Martian has no word to match any of nine dictionary definitions of "religion." He emphasises that "it was not possible to separate in the Martian the human concepts: 'religion,' 'philosophy,' and 'science' (133). It was also not possible for Plotinus. Jubal Harshaw remarks again and again that he had no idea what the true faith might be, that even the most lazy, anti-intellectual, tasteless religion might be the one true faith (134). Harshaw also says, "I've never understood how God could expect his creatures to pick the one true religion by faith--it strikes me as a sloppy way to run a universe" (120).

Jubal also says: "The only religious opinion I feel sure of is this: self-awareness is not just a bunch of amino acids bumping together!" (349). As for the Martian Old Ones, Jubal thinks "it is pious poppycock, suitable for enriching lawns," and any 'faith' is "intellectual laziness" (180). Jubal explains that only reading kept him from becoming a preacher--he lost his ignorance (230). In many respects Jubal is a more interesting character than Mike.

Mike explains his own difficulty:

But Jill, there are only three places to look. Science--and I was taught more about how the universe ticks while I was still in the nest than human scientists can yet handle. So much that I can't talk to them, even about as elementary a gimick as levitation. I'm not disparaging scientists. What they do is as it should be; I grok that fully. But what they are after is not what I am looking for. . . . Then there's philosophy--supposed to tackle everything. . . . All any philosopher comes out with is what he walked in with--except for self deluders who prove their assumptions by their conclusions. . . . So the answer ought to be here [in religion] . . . only it's not. (295-296)

<sup>6</sup> In fact, this attitude is clear throughout almost all of Heinlein's books. Friday is the only book (out of nearly fifty) where the protagonist engages in homosexual behavior; it is also the only book where the protagonist engages in a sexual relationship with a casual partner. (I except the unusual I Will Fear No Evil, where the protagonist has undergone a brain transplant and has the body of a female and the brain of a male. Although this book is generally agreed to be Heinlein's worst, it is consistent with his program, for he examines the relationship between spirit, mind, and body.)



In Stranger, Jubal tries to justify Mike's sexual behavior, even though personally, Jubal dislikes it:

Geniuses are justifiably contemptuous of lesser opinion and are always indifferent to sexual customs of the tribe; they make their own rules. Mike is a genius. . . . One god alone splits into at least two parts, and breeds, not just Jehovah--they all do. (350)

Parkin-Speer realizes that Heinlein's point is "that physical love is both good and healthy" (216).

Atheling complains that Mike's teachings have "no visible use at all for custom or morality" (The Issue at Hand 73). He is wrong. The water sharing ceremony, the use of proper honorifics between brothers, and the sexual fidelity within the nest indicates a great respect for custom. Of Heinlein characters, Slusser (The Classic Years) writes:

The organization of the various secret societies in early Heinlein stories reminds one of the Puritan Church of our founding fathers. Within these groups, emphasis is always placed on covenantal relationships. Strangely, none of them is the least bit anarchistic--one might suspect it of rugged individualists. On the contrary, members are ever careful to establish and observe to the letter, all kinds of binding sacraments. The ending of "Gulf," in fact, shows hero and heroine completing their "mission impossible" with a marriage ceremony. They say their vows (a third listener acts as "witness") as doom rushes upon them. What matter is death do them part at once--a memorial marker is erected on the spot to preserve their union. The pragmatic shaping power of the forms had become the important thing, far more than any mystical core they once may have had. (7-8)

<sup>7</sup> Kraft gives his source as Cos. 2.8.28, p.51; trans. Wetherbee, 109.

## Chapter Five

<sup>1</sup> Heinlein and Stevens each explore the concept of major man from a slightly different approach, but they do agree on the primary characteristics of major man:

fictional, wise, ethical, a culmination of the culture of man, a fiction worthy to be invested with divinity. These two writers also suggest that the universe is ruled--in some part--by the pleasure principle. Stevens does this in "The Emperor of Ice Cream," Heinlein in various comments by Larazus Long and Jubal Harshaw.

## Chapter Six

<sup>1</sup> In Issues at Hand ("Cathedrals"), Atheling comments on Heinlein's reverence of women:

Heinlein supplies no on-stage orgies, no anatomical details, and no washroom graffiti, nor does he even adopt the pornographer's device of treating a woman solely as a sexual object; indeed, his attitude is about as far toward the opposite pole as it is possible to go, short of Barchester Towers. I choose my example carefully, designedly, specifically reverent--and this very reverence has produced the most forthright and far-out treatment in the whole industry of science fiction, guaranteed to turn bluenoses positively white. (69-70)

Although Atheling is referring specifically to Stranger in a Strange Land, his assessment applies to all of Heinlein's fiction. Heinlein's heroines are all beautiful--whether they are particularly pretty or not. They are all very intelligent--number one in their chosen profession. They are all as competent as the heroes, sometimes more competent. For some bizarre reason, feminists are outraged at Heinlein's treatment of women. This may be because all of Heinlein's heroines are happy being female, and they are very interested in marriage (to the right male) and in having babies. Heinlein's women are also secure enough in their self-esteem that they can humor the male ego. In the Notebooks of Lazarus Long (Time Enough for Love), Heinlein explains that "Women are not property, and husbands who think otherwise are living in a dreamworld" (245). Heinlein also writes:

Whenever women have insisted on absolute equality with men, they have invariably wound up with the dirty end of the stick. What women are and what they can do makes them superior to men, and their proper tactic is to demand special privileges, all

traffic will bear. They should never settle merely for equality. For women, "equality" is a disaster. (250)

Heinlein, in Expanded Universe ["The Happy Days Ahead (Over the Rainbow)"] develops a scenario with a woman president. She makes great progress in straightening out the mess the government is in. He even proposes that all men be kicked out of legal and political practice and replaced by women. Heinlein obviously admires the female principle.

<sup>2</sup> Mike is not totally naive; neither is Heinlein. When one of his "water brothers" declined Mike's offer of a gift, Mike realized that "while water brothers spoke rightly, sometimes they spoke more rightly than others" (228). Though a brother would not lie, a brother might not always be cognizant of all the facts. Furthermore, politeness is as much a part of Mike's discipline as any other church.

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